

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

I. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-6, 8-12 and 14-20 are pending in this application. Claim 1 has been amended herewith to incorporate all of the limitations of prior claim 7 in order to expedite the prosecution of the present application. Claims 7 and 13 have been canceled without prejudice. Claim 8 has been amended to now depend from claim 1, in view of the cancellation of claim 7.

It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been added by virtue of this amendment. Support for the amended claims can be found throughout the specification as originally filed.

II. CLAIM OBJECTIONS

The Examiner objected to dependent claim 13 on the grounds that it adds no new limitation to claim 9.

Claim 13 has been deleted without prejudice. Accordingly, the above objection is now moot.

III. 35 U.S.C. 103(a) REJECTIONS

Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over US Patent No. 6,172,734 B1 to Wright in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,048,080 to Belliveau.

Initially, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication in the current Office Action that claims 9-12 and 14-20 have been allowed and that claim 2-8 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

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In order to expedite the prosecution of the present application, claim 1 has been amended herewith to incorporate all of the limitations of claim 7. As noted above, these amendments were made for the sole purpose of expediting the prosecution of the present application and thus in no way should be construed as an admission by the Applicants regarding the merits of the Examiner's rejections.

Therefore, in view of the above amendment, withdrawal of the rejections to independent claim 1 is respectfully requested. As claims 2-6 and 8 depend from and incorporate all of the limitations of amended claim 1, withdrawal of the objection to these dependent claims is likewise respectfully requested.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is believed that all pending claims as currently presented are in condition for allowance. A notice of allowance is respectfully requested.

According to currently recommended Patent Office policy, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below in the event that a telephone interview will advance the prosecution of this application. An early and favorable action is earnestly solicited.

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No fees are believed due with this amendment. However, if there are any fees due, then please charge them to deposit account no.: 50-1924.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature of Scott L. Appelbaum in black ink.

Scott L. Appelbaum

A handwritten date "3/22/05" in black ink.

Date

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop: AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. BOX 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.

A handwritten date "3/22/2005" in black ink.

Date

A handwritten signature of Elaine F. Mian in black ink.